

What is claimed is:

1. An image processing apparatus comprising:
an image memory for storing image data; and
a control section for performing control of writing each line of input image data to the image memory in turn while reading image data from the image memory in
5 predetermined coding units, in a manner such that:
when a picture of the image data has been written, if the number of data units, each corresponding to the coding unit, is equal to or below a first threshold, then a picture is skipped in the image data writing operation; and
when a picture of the image data has been read, if the number of
10 written lines is equal to or below a second threshold, then the same picture is again read in the image data reading operation.
2. An image processing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein:
the image data writing operation is performed using a clock signal in synchronism with the input image data; and
the image data reading operation is performed using a stabilized clock signal
5 different from the clock signal used in the image data writing operation.
3. An image processing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:
a coding section for coding the read image data in the predetermined coding units.
4. An image processing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the

predetermined coding unit is a Macro Block defined in MPEG.

5. An image processing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a picture corresponds to a frame of image data.

6. An image processing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a picture corresponds to a field of image data.

7. An image processing method comprising the step of:
performing control of writing each line of input image data to an image memory in turn while reading image data from the image memory in predetermined coding units, in a manner such that:

5 when a picture of the image data has been written, if the number of data units, each corresponding to the coding unit, is equal to or below a first threshold, then a picture is skipped in the image data writing operation; and

when a picture of the image data has been read, if the number of written lines is equal to or below a second threshold, then the same picture is again read
10 in the image data reading operation.

8. An image processing method as claimed in claim 7, wherein:
the image data writing operation is performed using a clock signal in synchronism with the input image data; and

the image data reading operation is performed using a stabilized clock signal
5 different from the clock signal used in the image data writing operation.

9. An image processing method as claimed in claim 7, further comprising the step of:
 coding the read image data in the predetermined coding units.
10. An image processing method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the predetermined coding unit is a Macro Block defined in MPEG.
11. An image processing method as claimed in claim 7, wherein a picture corresponds to a frame of image data.
12. An image processing method as claimed in claim 7, wherein a picture corresponds to a field of image data.
13. A computer readable storage medium storing a program for making a computer execute an operation including the step of:
 performing control of writing each line of input image data to an image memory in turn while reading image data from the image memory in predetermined coding units, in a manner such that:
 when a picture of the image data has been written, if the number of data units, each corresponding to the coding unit, is equal to or below a first threshold, then a picture is skipped in the image data writing operation; and
 when a picture of the image data has been read, if the number of written lines is equal to or below a second threshold, then the same picture is again read in the image data reading operation.

14. A computer readable storage medium as claimed in claim 13, wherein in the program:

the image data writing operation is performed using a clock signal in synchronism with the input image data; and

5 the image data reading operation is performed using a stabilized clock signal different from the clock signal used in the image data writing operation.

15. A computer readable storage medium as claimed in claim 13, wherein the program further comprises the step of:

coding the read image data in the predetermined coding units.

16. A computer readable storage medium as claimed in claim 13, wherein in the program, the predetermined coding unit is a Macro Block defined in MPEG.

17. A computer readable storage medium as claimed in claim 13, wherein in the program, a picture corresponds to a frame of image data.

18. A computer readable storage medium as claimed in claim 13, wherein in the program, a picture corresponds to a field of image data.